1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

Though the horse was not a primary source of food, stories and case histories reveal that horse meat was eaten on occasion and relished. In food-getting Comanche culture was basically a buffalo culture. [262]

As a beast of burden and as a means of personal transportation the horse had a fundamental value to the Comanche. In this respect the horse was a [492] capital good. But the single individual could not effectively utilize more than a dozen horses in his personal string for use in war and hunting.

Beyond this, horses were exceedingly acceptable as gifts and tokens of 431 esteem. As gifts given in reciprocity for services rendered and as fees to 422 medicine men, they served as an informal medium of exchange. As objects demandable in settlement of damage suits at law, they were a tangible form of material wealth endowed with legal and monetary significance.

In spite of all this, the great value of horses to the Comanche was a [554] fiduciary value of inflated worth as prestige tokens, a value rooted in socio-psychological rather than economic factors.

Though captured Mexican youths and children purchased from poverty- 233 stricken Shoshone Indians served as herdsmen, and the increase of herds 556 through selective breeding was practiced by the Comanches, the basic fac- [567] tor in the acquisition and retaining of a large herd was the military skill of the owners. Thus it is that the possession of horses figured in the prestige competition which so constantly and vigorously activated the life of the Comanche male.

The size of Comanche herds was immense. Probably no Indians were more richly supplied than they. Upon the count of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Antelope band alone surrendered one thousand five hundred horses to the United States at the time of the capitulation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on June 2, 1875.[17] A single Comanche, Big Fall By Tripping, is reputed among the Indians to have owned more than a thousand horses at one time.

The great communal hunts of the buffalo occurred during the summer 224 months after the seasonal moulting was done and hides were in their prime. This was the season for the in-gathering of the bands. Sporadic and uncontrolled hunting of buffalo occurred whenever they were available during other seasons.

The time of the hunt was determined in democratic assembly at which everybody was welcome to listen, but in which the war leaders took the important part. The date for departure being set, the young and able-bodied men with their women left the main camp. Children and old persons remained behind. The expedition travelled light, taking very small and undecorated tipis and what weapons and tools were necessary.

[17] Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Annual Report, Washington, 1875), p. 273.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

WAR AND WAR LEADERSHIP

COUP AND STATUS

Comanche war notions conformed to the general Plains pattern of raiding and coup-counting.[1] The raid might be made by a party of any size, from a single warrior up. The coup was an individual exploit, made in any contact with the enemy, *after* it had been socially recognized both as achieved in fact and as worthy of distinction; a rough equivalent of an official citation after a modern engagement, if such were undiluted by political considerations.

The life of the Comanche male centered around warfare and raiding. The main objectives were the taking of horses, the counting of coup, and the killing of enemies. Motives for horse-taking were two. Horses, as we have seen, were the important form of property accumulation; the man who had a large herd was wealthy; he could afford generosity to his friends and relatives; he harbored visiting guests from other tribes. Horses also gained him prestige for bravery and cleverness; the taking of horses under difficult conditions provided opportunity for exploits of valor. Such exploits made reputation. Horses gained by inheritance, gift, or breeding reflected the first value, but not the second (except as a carry-over). The killing of enemies was similar in that it led to prestige through accumulation of war honors; but it showed a more direct tribal function when vengeance for the death of a tribesman came in question—though tribal interest was not absent from horse-taking; to have your horses stolen was to be out-matched and shamed by the successful thief (an out-triber).

It required more bravery to hit an adversary with a spear or a war club than to pierce him with a bow-driven arrow or a gun-driven bullet. Thus striking an enemy gave ground for an honored coup, while long-distance killing did not. The how of the killing mattered more than the killing itself. A coup was more valued than a scalp, for, "Anybody could scalp a dead man." But the Comanche considered the removal of a scalp under fire as worthy of a coup. How much scalp the Comanche took depended on how hot the circumstances were. He preferred to take the whole scalp, but if he was pressed for time he seized only what he could get. Scalps were used in the Victory Dance and were desirable as fringe decoration for shirts and shields.

In the foregoing, and in the following, the legal analysis is deliberately pushed further than the Comanche would consciously push it. In any

[1] Cf. George Bird Grinnell, *Coup and Scalp Among the Plains Indians* (American Anthropologist, vol. 12, 1910), pp. 296–310.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

The principle of "soak the rich" was also a practice of Comanche law. Damages were scaled partly in accordance with the wealth of the offender. There was no feeling that a rich man *ought* to pay more. It was just that he could, and the Comanche prosecutor stuck the defendant for whatever he could squeeze.

Damages usually sought were horses. Blankets, guns, saddles, clothing, robes or any other article of personal property *except medicine powers and related paraphernalia* were frequently asked for in addition. The horse, however, remained the basic consideration. For adultery or wife-absconding, from one to ten horses were transferred, seldom more. Special pains were often taken to specify the horse or horses demanded by the aggrieved, and quite frequently the demand was for what both punished and humiliated: the favorite horse of the defendant. No matter how many horses the defendant might offer which were just as good, a prosecutor would be adamant in his demand that the favorite be delivered over to him. Such horses were favored by the owner for qualities of grace, speed and stamina, or just as often because the animal had been the gift of a beloved friend. Old men today in reminiscent thought will say that in the old days a warrior ofttimes loved his horse more than his wife, or child, or any other human being. It is in the light of this that the demand for a favorite horse indicates that such damages—indeed, any damages—are more than mere economic compensation. As the wronged man suffered a spiritual hurt, so must the guilty party suffer a spiritual loss. Thus, damages collected were in part damage done to the wrong-doer's "face."

The *beau geste* which crops up in so many cases is simply another indication of this point. The magnificent and haughty slaying of horses given, or due, in damages was no act of economic nature. This fine disdain indicates a psychological satisfaction more precious than the mere reception of wealth in payment of a wrong.

Doubly, therefore, was bargaining tense, with pride and punishment playing upon the economic factors. The jockeying and sparring of the bargain, with some of the imponderabilia of impinging attitudes are strikingly revealed in the following typical case.

Case 9. Levirate Claim: Mexican vs. Breaks Something
Informant: Breaks Something

"Mexican was a friend of Touched With A Closed Fist. They called each other brother. When Touched With A Closed Fist died a long time ago, Mexican went to claim the widow for his wife. That was Woman. Woman didn't want to live with him, so she came to me.

"We were living down at Red Store when one day two men came to see me.

The Comanches

177 231 He could run down and kill the buffalo on the open plains and afterwards carry it farther and save more of it than had been possible before.

It is difficult to overestimate the military value of the horse to the Comanche. It provided both the means and the incentive for more extended raids. Forays could be made more often and deeper into enemy territory, and the possibility of escaping safely with more plunder was greater with its use. It was primarily the horse that enabled the Comanches to extend their power southward, to beat the Spaniards and the Mexicans for more than a century, to make the Texas frontier unsafe for white settlement until they were restricted to a reservation, and to contend for a time successfully with the military forces of the United States from the Mexican border to north of the Arkansas River.

● 556 431 436 Horses constituted the most important type of property and the staple form of wealth. Because taking them under difficult conditions had a sociopsychological value, the acquisition of a large herd added greatly to the prestige of the owner. The owner of a large herd could make more munificent gifts to a prospective wife and members of her family and to other members of the tribe. Horses served also as an informal medium of exchange. They could be presented as gifts in reciprocity for services rendered and as fees to medicine men. When they were used in the settlement of controversies between individuals—as they generally were among the Comanches—they had legal as well as monetary significance.

231 Comanche esteem of horses knew no bounds. Each man had at least one favorite horse, although his personal string might run to dozens, or even hundreds, of animals. His favorite horse was kept picketed close to his tipi at night while the remuda grazed on the open plains. He tended it, petted it, and adored it. "Some men loved their horses more than they loved their wives," said Post Oak Jim. To this, others added, "Or child, or any other any human being." And in seeking legal settlements, whatever else the prosecuting man and his friends might demand of the offending culprit, they were sure to insist on the favorite horse.

231 681

In his own experience with a damage suit, Breaks Something had to deal with this problem.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

into the timbered area. The Shoshones of Idaho had obtained their horses by the route west of the continental divide about 1690 to 1700, or approximately twenty years before horses had reached the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers.

Ponca tradition credits the Comanches with having the first horses seen by the people of their tribe. According to it, the Comanches at the time fought on horseback, using the long-handled stone battle-axe as their principal weapon. Furthermore, the Poncas claim that the Comanches had thick covers of overlapping pieces of rawhide to protect the breasts and sides of their animals. The Comanches taught the Poncas how to ride and to use the horse as a beast of burden. Soon afterwards they left the country, and the Poncas knew not where they went.[8]

The Comanches probably acquired horses as early as, or before, the Shoshones. They certainly had them by the time they moved into the South Plains. They were raiding in New Mexico in 1705. The next year, the Apaches in the northeastern part of that province suffered from Comanche horse-raiding expeditions. Comanche raiding in New Mexico apparently became progressively more frequent, for in 1719 the governor of the province sent a punitive expedition against the Comanches in an attempt to check the forays.

How many horses the Comanches accumulated is impossible to estimate with any degree of accuracy. Probably no Indians were more richly supplied than they. Clinton Smith reported that his band had about 6,000 head, about one-half of which were the property of the chief; and that sometimes within a single night horses by the thousands were captured or stolen.[9] Captain Marcy estimated that the most successful warriors owned from fifty to two hundred animals each. By comparison, a Sioux considered himself wealthy if he owned thirty to forty.[10] The Antelope band, with a population of less than two thousand, had about 15,000 horses and 300 to 400 head of mules in 1867. Modern Comanches say that A Big Fall By Tripping owned 1,500 horses at the time of his death, although he was so fat he could not ride a single one, but had to travel sitting on a travois.

[8] Alice C. Fletcher and Frances La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," B. A. E. *Bulletin No. 27*, 79–80.

[9] Clinton and Jeff D. Smith, *The Boy Captives*, 50–51.

[10] Maximilian, Prince of Wied, *Travels in the Interior of America* (vol. I of Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*), 160.

The Comanches

231 174 556 not ride a single one, but had to travel sitting on a travois. In comparison, the entire Pawnee tribe had 1,400, the Osage 1,200, and the Omaha 1,200. The greater the distance from Texas and Mexico, the fewer the horses found.

231 The number of horses possessed by the South Plains Indians decreased rapidly in the last half of the nineteenth century. The Antelope band surrendered only 1,500 head to the United States at the time of their capitulation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on June 2, 1875.[11] The Comanche, Kiowa, Apache, and Delaware tribes had 14,810 head in 1874, but three years later they possessed only 4,194. Subsequent to just one engagement, on the morning of September 28, 1874, the day after he had destroyed the Comanche-Kiowa-Cheyenne camp in Palo Duro Canyon, Colonel MacKenzie's troop shot and killed some 1,400 Indian horses.[12] Such attrition devastated the great herds.

The Comanches obtained their supply of horses by gift and trade, by breeding, by capturing wild ones, and by raiding.

431 It was considered a gracious gesture to give a favorite horse to a friend. And although it was general practice to kill a warrior's personal riding string on his grave, many a man before his death willed his favorite horse to his best friend. Even the poorest had at least one horse, for the public approved the rich man who celebrated an important occasion by giving a horse to some poor old fellow who could not rustle one for himself.

[764 428]

728 [439] In intertribal trading the Comanches exchanged horses for goods, but by 1850 they had so many horses themselves that they never bothered to trade for them. In the great peace-making in 1840 between the Cheyennes on the one side and the Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa-Apaches on the other, the Cheyennes gave guns, blankets, calico, beads, and brass kettles, while the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches offered horses. Mountain, the Kiowa spokesman, had said, "We all of us have many horses; as many as we need; we do not wish to accept any horses as presents, but we shall be glad to accept any other gifts. We, the Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches, have made a road to give many horses to you when we come here." They were as good as his word; every Cheyenne man, woman, and child

[11] Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1875, 273.
[12] Nye, *Carbine and Lance*, 223.

7: Richardson D-4 (no date) 1929
NO6 Comanche NO6

492 upon the side of the horse thus making of the animal a perfect screen between themselves and an imaginary enemy. "In this wonderful condition," he relates, "he will hang whilst his horse is at fullest speed, carrying with him his bow and his shield, and also long lance of fourteen feet in length, all or either of which he will wield upon his enemy as he passes; rising and throwing his arrows over the horses' back, or with equal ease and equal success under the horse's neck." Finally the artist learned that a partial explanation of the marvel was in the fact that a short hair halter was passed under the neck of the horse and both ends tightly braided into the mane on the withers. Through this loop the young warrier ran his arm and thus secured an anchor and rest for the fore part of his body.[20]

556 231 Horses were naturally the only form of wealth available to the Comanches. They were both useful and easily moved and an Indian's wealth was measured by the number of horses he possessed. Their horses were of good, indifferent or poor quality, depending on the success a given band had had in recruiting their scrubby mustang herds with better bred animals taken from the Mexican or Anglo-American frontier. With these Indians horse-stealing was both a science and an art and no warrior's training was complete until he was proficient in this respect. At the camp on the Clear Fork, in 1854, previously referred to, one warrior carried a shield [554 707] "Ornamented with a *human scalp*, a grizzly bear's claw and a mule's tail, significant of the brave warrior and successful hunter and horse-thief."[21] Chief Is-sa-keep, of a band of northern Comanches, once told Captain Marcy that his four sons were as fine young men as could be found, that they were a great comfort to him in his old age, "and could steal more horses than any other young men in his band."[22] The brave's best horse was always saved for the hunt or war party and the Indian had that love for their favorite steed that always characterizes good horsemen.

721 648 As is the case among most savage peoples, war was a normal condition with the Comanches. For instance if expediency dictated that there be peace between the Comanches and Osages, the Texas

20. North American Indians, II. 73-74.
21. Parker, Notes Taken with Marcy, 195.
22. Exploration of the Red River, 97.

9: Gladwin E-5 (1940) 1948 NO6 Comanche NO6

men could not afford to gather in too large numbers. On other other hand, wealthier men often had a number of tipis, and their feminine entourage might thus have been of considerable size. 595 [556]

It is obvious that many opportunities were present for the growth of hostility between the wives, and fights appear to have been not uncommon.[12] The husband usually did not interfere, but left it to some of the wives' relatives or some other influential person. None but the favorite wife would come to the husband with grievances against another, as he was not likely to be very sympathetic.

Siblings-in-law. Of all the members of her husband's family a woman is likely to be most intimate with his sister. As we have seen before, he frequently left his wife with his sister when he went off on raiding parties; whether this was more common than leaving her with his brother is not clear, but one certainly gets such an impression. In this situation, the sister had pretty complete authority over the wife, at least as far as her relations with other men were concerned, but the usual pattern was of friendliness and mutual help, coupled with a certain amount of mild joking if they felt like it. 607

Brothers-in-law frequently felt a strong bond, and were likely to seek each other's company and aid in preference to any but their own brothers. This is doubtless closely connected with the recognized custom of men giving their sisters to their friends as wives. Brothers-in-law are expected to joke a great deal together, the jokes being insulting, personal, and often coarse. The words for spider, *talé'cɪ*, and for tarantula, *pi'hire'cɪ*, are recognized to mean "someone's brother-in-law" and "hairy brother-in-law" respectively, while common pharses substituted for this relationship term are given as "our testicles" and "our smell of dog urine." Examples of this sort could be multiplied indefinitely. [195] [522]

The dominant pattern of behavior between siblings-in-law of opposite sex is the reciprocal joking relationship so commonly found among Plains tribes. It apparently does not exist among the Shoshoni in just this form, and the existence of the two terms for denoting this relationship among the Comanche suggests the intrusion of the custom along with the term, though I have been unable to locate a similar word in another tribe. Repeated questions failed to elicit any preference for the *hâipia* (sibling-in-law of opposite sex) or the spouse term in any given situation, joking or otherwise; they seem to be interchangeable. The genealogies reveal that different individuals with whom the informants joked and generally carried on similar relationships were sometimes called by one, sometimes by the other, and often by both terms. However, although the spouse terms are often used in joking too, there is no doubt that the joking *relationship* was on the basis of their being each other's *hâipia*. Thus there was some feeling that it was not quite right for husband and wife,

[12] Catlin (1845, Vol. 2, pp. 64–5) found such fights to be among the most striking features of Comanche community life.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 N06 Comanche N06
Oklahoma

578 754 561 754 561 554 558 578 rationale for witchcraft, especially between males, in the nomadic Comanche culture. In a society which emphasized physical prowess, the old and enfeebled were at a definite disadvantage. The older men could not join the younger in the prestigeful activities of war, sexual adventuring, and hunting, and they were therefore forced to turn to magic and supernatural means if they desired to continue their futile attempts to compete for social power and prestige with the younger men of the tribe. Since Comanche culture was not oriented to allow an individual to acquire prestige and position through material acquisition alone, this avenue was also denied the older men.

Factors in the Decline of Witchcraft

754 178 561 536 578 Perhaps a factor contributing to the lessening incidences of witchcraft, noted by Sanapia even in her own time, can be attributed to the fact that in the postreservation period the older men of the tribe were able to acquire a certain economic power through such channels as land allotments and welfare, while at the same time the younger men were being denied their main traditional avenue to prestige—war. Thus a more tolerable balance developed between the prestige and social power levels of the young and the old. The woman, whose social position rose and fell with the male to whom she was attached, also acquired the benefits of this postreservation phenomenon. A woman could own land like a male, and with older women this became an attraction to the younger men, men perhaps born too late to take full advantage of the land allotments. Therefore, an older and economically more powerful woman could more successfuly compete with a younger woman for available males.

754 178 561 844 578 However, neither economic power nor supernatural methods can cause a woman to produce offspring after she has reached a certain advanced age. In a moment of anger or spite, a young Comanche woman's invectives directed toward an old woman will inevitably include a caustic reminder to the older woman of her "uselessness" as a woman. Sanapia and many of my female Comanche informants mentioned the potential dangers which a young woman exposes herself and her children to when she flaunts her offspring in front of an older woman whose children have left her. This, in Sanapia's opinion, is the reason for the high degree of witched infants and why Sanapia immediately accuses an old woman for the act of witchcraft.

754 178 571 361 Several other factors can be suggested as relevant to the decline of Comanche witchcraft. With the allotment of lands the various family units within the same band became more isloated and thus any possibility of an act which could motivate an individual to operate witchcraft against another member of that band became lessened as relatively forced social proximity, as was the case in the reservation period, became lessened among band members.

754 178 887 888 As the band's economic function was destroyed, the individual family units were compelled to become more independent. Thus, the older members of the Comanche extended families were necessarily allotted tasks as more jobs had to be handled by a smaller number of individuals. In this manner the older people